

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MUSCAT 1240

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y TEXT PARA F

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, XF
SUBJECT: QUESTIONS ON PALESTINIAN POPULATION CONCENTRATIONS
LOCATED IN MIDDLE EAST COUNTRIES

REF STATE 218639

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS IN REFTEL FOR OMAN ARE GIVEN BELOW.
THE SUBPARAGRAPHS ARE KEYED TO THOSE IN PARA 1 OF REFTEL.
(A) WE HAVE NO FIGURE FOR THE TOTAL NUMBER O PALESTINIANS
LIVING IN OMAN, BUT IT CANNOT BE LARGE GIVEN THE POLICY OF
THE GOVERNMENT DISCOURAGING PALESTINIANS FROM ENTERING
THE COUNTRY. WE ESTIMATE THE TOTAL AT A FEW HUNDRED ONLY,
PERHAPS 500 AT THE OUTSIDE. THE BIRTH RATE IS CERTAINLY
NOT HIGH, AND SINCE WE BELIEVE MOST ARE MEN WORKING
HERE UNACCOMPANIED, BY THE FAMILIES THE BIRTH RATE IS
LARGELY IRRELEVANT. ALL OF THE PALESTINIANS OF WORKING
AGE ARE EMPLOYED, FOR OTHERWISE THEY WOULD BE REQUIRED
TO LEAVE.

(B) VIRTUALLY ALL THE PALESTINIANS EMPLOYED HERE WOULD BE
AT THE PROFESSIONAL OR SKILLED TECHNICIAN LEVEL. THEIR
OCCUPATIONS PROBABLY VARY, AND THEY ARE IN BOTH THE
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR. WE KNOW THAT SOME ARE IN
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BUREAUCRATIC ADVISORY CAPACITIES, AND WE UNDERSTAND
THAT SOME ARE ENGINEERS IN THE CONSTRUCTION TRADE. WE
WOULD PUT THE AVERAGE AGE IN THE MIDDLE OR HIGH 30'S.
IN MOST CASES, THEY STAY IN OMAN FOR A FEW YEARS ONLY,
THIS BEING THE TERM OF THE USUAL EXPATRIATE CONTRACT.
THE AERAGE EARNINGS WOULD BE RELATIVELY LARGE, AND
WE GUESS THAT HIGH PERCENTAGE IS REPATRIATED TO

FAMILIES OUTSIDE OMAN.

(C) WE KNOW OF NO POST-1973 EMPLOYMENT TRENDS, UNLESS ONE CAN CITE AN INCREASING NERVOUSNESS DETECTABLE IN THE OMANI GOVERNMENT ABOUT PALESTINIAN ACTIVITIES AND HENCE A HEIGHTENED DISINCLINATION TO LET PALESTINIAN S INTO THE COUNTRY.

(D) ONCE IN THE COUNTRY WITH A RESIDENCE PERMIT, A PALESTINIAN IS TREATED LEGALLY LIKE ANY EXPATRIATE ARAB. THE RESTRICTIONS ENCOUNTERED RELATE EXCLUSIVELY TO GETTING THE INITIAL PERMISSION TO ENTER AND LIVE IN OMAN. HOWEVER, A PALESTINIAN RESIDENT HERE MAY BE WATCHED MORE CLOSELY THAN OTHERS. CHILDREN BORN IN OMAN TO PALESTINIAN PARENTS ARE TREATED AS EXPATRIATES.

(E) OMAN DOES HAVE A GENERAL POLICY TO REPLACE FOREIGNERS WITH OMANIS WHENEVER POSSIBLE, BUT AT THE SKILLED TECHNICAL LEVELS INVOLVED IN THESE CASES THE OMANIS ARE WELL AWARE THAT THEY NEED FOREIGN HELP FOR QUITE A FEW MORE YEARS. THUS, THE PALESTINIANS WHO ARE HERE ARE NOT APT TO BE SQUEEZED OUT SOON JUST BECAUSE OF THIS FACTOR.

(F) THE OMANI POPULACE PROBABLY DOES NOT REACT TO
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PALESTINIANS LIVING HERE EITHER POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY. THE GOVERNMENT, AS INDICATED ABOVE, IS SKITTISH ABOUT LETTING MANY INTO THE COUNTRY. BUT WE HAVE DETECTED NO EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE GOVERNMENT TO ORCE OUT THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN LET IN.

(G) THE QUESTION OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IS NOT VERY RELEVANT TO MAN. THE COUNTRY'S FLDGLING EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IS INTENDED FOR OMANIS ONLY. EXPATRIATES, INCLUDING PALESTINIANS, WOULD BE EXPECTED TO SET UP EXPATRIATE SCHOOLS OR SEND THEIR CHILDREN ABROAD. AS NOTED ABOVE, THE FAMILIES OF MOST PALESTINIANS EMPLOYED HERE ARE PROBABLY LVING ELSEWHERE AND THEREFORE BEING SCHOOLED ELSEWHERE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NWSCAT 1240

(H) THE GOVERNMENT HAS SHOWN A TENDENCY RECENTLY TO BE MORE RESTRICTIVE THAN IT WAS PREVIOUSLY ON THE ENTRY OF PALESTINIANS, BOTH AS VISITORS AND AS RESIDENTS. THIS IS NOTABLE ESPECIALLY BECAUSE OMAN'S IMMIGRATION POLICY HAS LONG BEEN FAIRLY RESTRICTIVE AGAINST ALL FOREIGNERS, AND IT ALWAYS PUT THE PALESTINIANS IN A SUPER-RESTRICTED CATEGORY ALONG WITH IRAQIS, LIBYANS, AND OTHER "RADICAL" ARAB NATIONALITIES. THUS, THE OUTLOOK IS FOR AN EVEN SMALLER NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS EMPLOYED HERE.

(I) THE PRINCIPAL INCENTIVE IN OMAN FOR A PALESTINIAN HAVING A MARKETABLE SKILL IS THAT THE COUNTRY IS AN OIL-PRODUCING STATE (THOUGH NOT SO WEALTHY AS OTHERS) WITH AN UNDERDEVELOPED ECONOMY AND WORKING FORCE. THEREFORE, SKILLS ARE IN DEMAND AND THE PAY IS GOOD. THE PRINCIPAL DISINCENTIVE IS THAT THE OMANI GOVERNMENT SCRUTINIZES THE ENTRY REQUEST OF ANY PALESTINIAN WITH A JAUNDICED EYE AND IS LIKELY TO REJECT THE ENTRY APPLICATION.

(J) THERE ARE NO REFUGEE CAMPS IN OMAN, THE PALESTINIANS LIVING HERE ARE GENERALLY HOUSED BY THE COMPANY THEY WORK FOR, OR BY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE MANNER OF OTHER FOREIGN ADVISERS. OTHERS RENT VILLAS OR APARTMENTS ON THE ECONOMY. THEY THUS
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HAVE HOUSING THAT DEPENDS ON THEIR RANK AND PAY AND DO NOT DIFFER FROM OTHER FOREIGNERS IN THIS RESPECT. THEY DO NOT CONCENTRATE TOGETHER, UNLESS SEVERAL PALESTINIAN HEADS OF FAMILY HAPPEN TO WORK FOR THE SAME COMPANY AND LIVE IN THE SAME COMPANY COMPOUND.

(K) THERE EXPECTATION ON THE PART OF EITHER
THE PALESTINIANS OR THE OMANIS THAT THEY WILL
ASSIMILATE. THEY ARE HERE TEMPORARILY ON CONTRACT,
AND THEN THEY WILL LEAVE. THE ONLY EXCEPTION TO THIS
PATTERN THAT WE KNOW OF IS THAT FOUR PALESTINIANS,
ONE MALE AND THREE FEMALES, WERE GIVEN OMANI
CITIZENSHIP IN 1973 BY DECREE. THIS PROCEDURE IS
REQUIRED FOR ANYBODY WHO DOES NOT QUALIFY AS AN
OMANI UNDER THE REGULAR RULES BUT WHO SEEKS
CITIZENSHIP. DECREES CONFERRING SUCH STATUS ARE
ISSUED FROM TIME TO TIME, THOUGH THEY ARE BY NO
MEANS COMMON. THERE WAS NOTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT
THIS CASE, AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE. PROBABLY THESE
INDIVIDUALS HAPPENED TO WANT OMANI CITIZENSHIP
AND WERE AMONG THE RELATIVELY FEW OF ANY NATIONALITY
DEEMED ACCEPTABLE.
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